

## **CANINE OPERATIONS - INTRODUCTION**

**9440**

(February 2002)

For many years, fire service and law enforcement agencies had to rely totally upon the expertise of fire investigators in determining the causes of fires. Mechanical devices (referred to as hydrocarbon detection devices or “sniffers”) were developed to assist investigators in determining if an accelerant material had been used or was present at a fire scene. Many times, these devices failed to register possible hydrocarbon residue for various reasons, such as low or dead batteries or improper calibration settings, etc.

A program was developed to train canines to detect residues and substances used as accelerants. The program was administered in the same manner as that of the drug detection programs which have been proven successful by numerous departments throughout the State.

Canines are trained to detect petroleum-based products including, but not limited to, the following:

Gasoline	Kerosene	Coleman Fuel
Acetone	Paint Thinner	Tuoluene
Stove Alcohol	Naphtha	Charcoal Lighter Fluid Lacquer
Thinner	Diesel	Methylethyl Ketone (MEK)
Cigarette Lighter Fluid		

In addition to the basic training, the dogs undergo annual re-certification training, as well as receiving weekly training with the handler.

It is important to understand that an accelerant detection canine will not tell the investigator what caused the fire; they will only indicate to the investigator where, if any, hydrocarbon accelerants or products may be present in the fire debris. These dogs are not arson detection dogs; they are accelerant detection dogs and, as such, are a valuable tool to the investigator in determining the causes of fires. Unlike hydrocarbon detection machines, canines can differentiate between actual accelerants and similar odors, which are normally present at a fire scene. Canines can shorten the amount of time an investigator spends looking for accelerant patterns, and can lessen the number of samples that the investigator needs to collect to send to a laboratory for analysis.

## **PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM**

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This section provides both policy and guidance for program operation and detection canine use. It is intended to provide managers, handlers, and other employees with essential information in order to understand and conduct the program.

Canine handlers and canines perform a unique and highly visible role in accomplishing the organizational mission. It is a role that requires the highest standard of sound judgment and dedication. Many times, the mere availability of a trained detection canine has proven to be a deterrent to would-be arsonists. Persons prone to criminal activities are becoming aware of the detection canine's abilities which, sometimes in itself, becomes a deterrent to crime.

Public assistance, crime prevention, and handler safety are all components of this specialized assignment. Sound judgment, common sense, and a clear awareness of Departmental philosophies, both on and off duty, require a special commitment and a continuing high level of dedication and training. The material contained in this section is directed towards providing the substance for a successful program.

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